

National News

From being an ardent member of the Opposition FDC party, where she was the deputy treasurer, to joining the ruling NRM party, Ms Among has had a meteoric rise within a space of 10 years.

The rise, stumbles and fall of Anita Among

BY FRANKLIN DRAKU

The curtains are fast falling on the career of outgoing Speaker Anita Annet Among after she was reportedly advised to stay off the race to extend her term to superintend the 12th Parliament.

The quick sequence of events fell in after a tense two-hour meeting at the State House, Entebbe on Thursday last week, which compromised her political fortunes when she was also barred from phoning the new MPs, and ordered not to leave her Kampala-based Nakasero residence.

Ms Among's residence was subsequently raided on Saturday night by combined police and army personnel to investigate allegations of corruption, illicit enrichment, and money laundering. But what quickly went so wrong for the flamboyant Speaker of the 11th Parliament, who seemed to have it all, including the solid backing of the President, and his NRM party parliamentary Caucus, and was tentatively endorsed for re-election?

From being an ardent member of the Opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) party where she was the deputy treasurer, to joining the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party, Ms Among has had a meteoric rise within a space of 10 years.

Ms Among twice ran in 2006 and 2011 for the Bukedea District Woman MP seat on the FDC party ticket and lost in both elections. She changed party loyalty in 2016 and ran as an independent candidate, and emerged victorious.

But within FDC, sources said Ms Among had been President Museveni's mole in the Opposition, and with that came the bottomless cash basket at her disposal.

When she joined Parliament as an independent candidate, FDC still appointed her as the deputy chairperson for the Committee on Commissions, Statutory Authorities and State Enterprises (Cosase). But the party would later backtrack when it became apparent that she was in bed with the ruling NRM party, which she eventually joined in 2020 ahead of the party primaries for the 2021 polls.

As soon as she joined the NRM party, Ms Among went unopposed in the party primaries and general election, joining Parliament for a second term.

She was among the several NRM candidates who were

Speaker Jacob Oulanyah presented her with another opportunity to rise to the helm of power, propelling her to be the third in hierarchy in the country, after the President and the Vice President.

Oulanyah had served for only nine months and 24 days when he died in a US hospital after a long illness. His death created a power vacuum at the Parliament of Uganda that had to be filled.

Good fortune

On March 25, 2022, Ms Among was elected by the MPs as Speaker of the 11th Parliament, vesting her with control over the legislative branch of the government. She was assured of access to unchecked resources and power to execute what she wanted to do in the third arm of Government.

Ms Among quickly projected powers both within the Parliament and outside, through political patronage. She not only got favours from Uganda, but also from the Holy See; from the head of the Catholic Church at the Vatican, where she was a regular visitor to the late Pope Francis. She made her first visit in August 2023, where she held a private audience with Pope Francis. During the meeting, the Pope reportedly commended the Ugandan Parliament for passing laws to uphold family values.

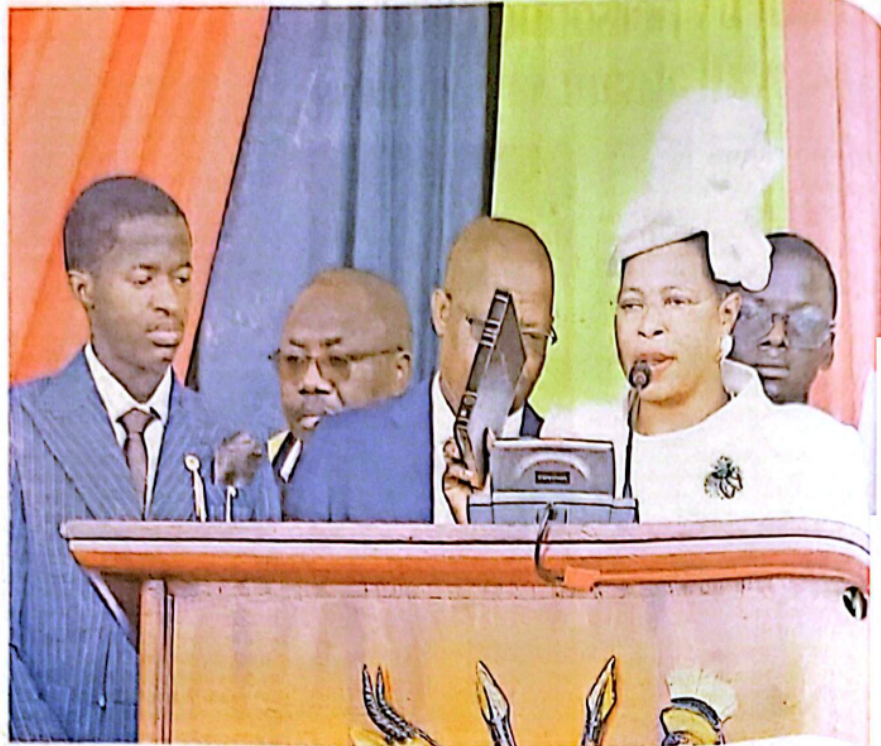
Again, accompanied by an extensive group of family members, Ms Among met the pontiff in August 2024 to introduce her newborn twins to the Pope for his blessings.

A year later, in August 2025, Ms Among again travelled to the Vatican City to attend a Mass dedicated to global peace and unity, and was granted a private meeting with the Pope shortly afterward.

Back home, Ms Among had managed to forge a close relationship with President Museveni, who visited her constituency to officially open a science laboratory at Bukedea Comprehensive School, among other development projects established by the Speaker.

Before her open camaraderie with the President's ruling party, the two had courted secretly while Ms Among was still in the Opposition FDC party. Party members at the Najjanankumbi-based headquarters said during her time as deputy treasurer, her money purse was bottomless, prompting divided opinion within the FDC as some stalwarts were accusing her of being an NRM mole.

... of the Uganda People's



Outgoing Speaker of Parliament, Ms Anita Among, takes oath as Bukedea Woman MP last Wednesday. She was accompanied by her family members. PHOTO/COURTESY OF PARLIAMENT OF UGANDA X HANDLE

Wesley Mumbere's palace, killing more than 100 people and subsequently arresting the Rwenzururu king, leaving political leaders there, who were mainly FDC, angry.

By 2017, Mr Museveni sought to meet MPs from Greater Kasese, and it was left to Ms Among to persuade the FDC MPs to meet the President.

"I am a peace lover, and being that Winnie (Kiiza, then Leader of the Opposition in Parliament) is my friend, it was easy for me to convince her to meet the President. I did it in the interest of peace and security of our country," Ms Among later told *The Observer* newspaper.

What then went wrong?

Ms Among's tenure as Speaker was marked with a fair share of controversy, including the Karamoja Iron Sheet Scandal, alleged corruption and maladministration in Parliament, and a string of others that set the stage for her stumbling and eventual downfall.

A famous 1887 quote by British historian Lord Acton states that "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely", and it was this absolute power that led to cracks in Ms Among's powers.

Ahead of the May 12 swearing-in of President Museveni and MPs of the 12th Parliament, this publication broke a story of Ms Among acquiring a new ride, the Rolls-Royce Cullinan, valued at Shs3.4 billion after taxes.

This acquisition sparked widespread conversation over her opulent lifestyle, with the son of the President disparaging the Speaker and subsequently withdrawing his support for her bid for the country's third most important position.

"I have been Mzee's [Museveni] son for 52 years, but I have never sat in a Rolls-Royce ever. I don't think Mzee's sat in one either," he posted on his X account.

Through Mr Daudi Kabanda, the secretary general of Patriotic League of Uganda, whose leader is Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba, the son of the President,

their endorsement of Ms Among.

"That the endorsement of the Rt Hon Anita Annet Among and Rt Hon Thomas Tayebwa as candidates for Speaker and Deputy Speaker respectively for the 12th Parliament of Uganda vide a letter dated March 11, 2026, is retracted and withdrawn with immediate effect," Mr Kabanda wrote, saying PLU MPs would vote for candidates fronted by President Museveni.

Days later, Gen Muhoozi went on his X handle to announce the endorsement of Mr Jacob Markons Oboho as the choice for Speaker of the 12th parliament.

Early telltale signs

But some early signs of trouble began bubbling to the surface for Ms Among in 2023, when cracks started emerging between her and President Museveni. At the time, the President ordered an investigation into the conduct of the Bukedea District chairperson by-elections, after the death of Moses Olemaun, the then LCS chairperson.

During the by-elections, Ms Among was accused of orchestrating violence and vote rigging, forcing Mr Museveni to write a letter to Brig Henry Isoke, the head of the State House Anti-Corruption Unit, asking him to investigate the circumstances under which the Bukedea by-election was conducted.

In a one-page letter, Mr Museveni said government officials, whom he didn't reveal, had emerged on the night of nomination, invaded Amagor's house, in the process confiscated his academic papers, and stole Shs163m in a bid to stop him from getting nominated.

Amagor, even after being allowed to contest, was reportedly attacked at the gates of the EC in Bukedea. Mr Museveni also accused government officials, whom he also did not name, of vote rigging.

Mr Museveni's letter led to the arrest of then Bukedea Resident District Commissioner (RDC) William Wilberforce Tukei, and Charles Okoto, the then Bukedea District Chairperson (LCS).

Mr Okoto was later transferred to Parliament, while Mr Tukei was reinstated to his job. Yet another stumble came in the form of a scandal over iron sheets meant for the vulnerable people in Karamoja, finding their way to the homes of ministers and some MPs.

When news emerged that Ms Among had given out the iron sheets to schools in her district through her foundation, she said: "I have decided to buy 500 iron sheets and give them back. I have my personal assistant to take back the iron sheets to OPM [Office of the Prime Minister]," she said.

The UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office later announced sanctions against Speaker Among, Mary Goretti Kitutu, and Agnes Nandutu, who were both axed from Cabinet as senior and State minister for Karamoja, respectively.

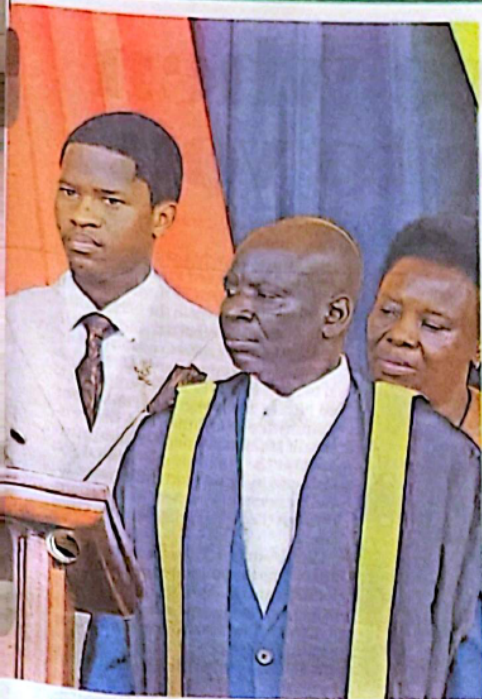
The freezing of assets means that UK citizens or businesses, including the banks, are forbidden from dealing with the assets of the sanctioned individuals, most especially those located in the UK.

The US Department of State swiftly followed and slapped travel sanctions against Ms Among and her family over her involvement in what they described as significant corruption tied to her leadership of Uganda's Parliament.

Ms Among's reaction was to claim that she was being targeted by the West for spearheading the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act.

"I'm carrying a cross for 48 million Ugandans because of the Anti-Homosexuality Act we passed in 2023," Among told reporters. "All this I know is because of the anti-homosexual law that we passed as Parliament. This is the beginning, and I know other things are coming under the pretext of corruption, theft, and others, but we serve a living God. We shall not allow homosexuals to go against our values and cultures. If they want them, let them go to their countries. The law is there, and it will be implemented," she said at the time.

If the iron sheet scandal was not big enough, then the Parliament Ex-



Then Speaker Anita Among chairs the plenary in the 11th Parliament. PHOTO/FILE

fall right from the time she crossed from FDC to NRM. He said Ms Among attempted to outdo herself in trying to appease the Executive instead of championing the oversight responsibility.

"I think the mistake she made is that she over-assumed certain things. She did not understand the art of politics that the NRA leadership plays. When she became a Deputy Speaker and then Speaker, she wanted to do things that pleased the Executive. She tried to create a working relationship that closes the gap between the Executive and the Legislature. These are two independent bodies that are supposed to operate independently," Dr Kakum-

ba said.

He added: "She wanted to appear as a very good cadre of the NRM and was willing to do whatever was coming from the Executive and implement it to the letter. Now this exposed her weakness because what she was doing was indirectly painting NRM badly."

Dr Kakumba also said Ms Among made a mistake flaunting her wealth to the world when she hosted thousands of people at her home in Bukedea, yet the President and his children, whom she invited, have played private in every deal, including what they own.

"I ask you, how many times have you shown the public Museveni's private residence? But you come out, and you show the public the mansion. For what? This creates a threat. You know you can easily put yourself in trouble when you do things that threaten the power of your boss, because of that mobilisation. For example, she held a certain function at that powerful residence. You know how many MPs there are and they represent different constituencies," he said, adding, "that is not a simple thing. It is a threat because Parliament is a powerful institution where you can mobilise MPs to impeach the President."

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hibition by a team of activists that unearthed a lot of rot within the institution that is supposed to hold the other arms of government accountable.

The online expose revealed cases of gross alleged corruption and malpractice in the House. The three-month exhibition, which started on February 24, 2024, and ran until mid-May, brought out the issue of the Shs1.7 Service Award to the former Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and four NRM Parliamentary backbench Commissioners, the irregular recruitments at Parliament, and the bloated budget of the Office of the Speaker and Deputy, among others.

The exhibition also unearthed a reported Shs3b for 10 trips outside the country between July 2023 and January 2024, which were allegedly not undertaken.

Mr Chris Obore, the director of communication at the Parliament, defended the expenses and said the trip was taken, but an analysis of the Parliament Hansard by this newspaper in March indicated the Speaker was in the country and chaired the House during the days Mr Obore claimed she had travelled.

Also, of concern was the huge withdrawals of money by parliamentary staff closely associated with Among for alleged Corporate Social Responsibility.

Did Among trigger own downfall?

Dr Juma Sultan Kakuba, the head of the Department of Political Science at Kyambogo University, yesterday said Ms Among orchestrated her own down-

OPINION



"I think the mistake she made is that she over-assumed certain things. She did not understand the art of politics that the NRA leadership plays." -Dr Juma Sultan Kakuba, head of Department of Political Science at Kyambogo University